

A strange scene at Newk's Eatery

I had never, and still have never, been to Newk's Eatery. I'd never even heard of it. I was there just passing by, to pick up a cake pan from the neighboring Williams-Sonoma. I had my mask on and hands sanitized, trying to stay the appropriate six feet away from strangers to get to the back of the store where I could pick up my wares. I was hurrying by, trying to stay in the heat as little as possible, when I heard a flurry of voices from a couple paces ahead of me. I looked over and I was stunned.

There were three full tables of elderly people having the usual Sunday brunch.

For a second I almost started laughing. Here I was, a healthy sixteen year old standing in the heat in my little mask and my little sanitized hands and quarantine attitude, seeing a bunch of old people who seemingly could not care less about the virus. I imagined one of the polished old white ladies glancing in my direction and turning her nose up at my mask, and then whispering to her friends about how "gosh young people these days are so susceptible to the news." And for a second, I felt totally stupid because it was like I was interrupting all of these nice people's brunch and how silly is that to just stumble by, dressed like we're in some kind of a global pandemic or something. It was so ironic, because the virus could hurt her way more than it would me but her and the other nice elderly folk are going about their lives blissfully arrogant.

I controlled my urge to laugh but as I continued my day I couldn't stop thinking about those people. After all the irony had passed, I started noticing how weird it had felt to see them. It hadn't been because they were old, it was because I had felt like I was looking in on a place that was not where I was. Different wasn't even the right word for it; a better one would be opposite. They were sitting and I was standing, they were old and I was young, they were close and I was distanced, they were careless and I was careful. Just 50 feet away from the image of coronavirus, a long line of masked fellows waiting to get groceries, was this abrupt scene of normal pre-quarantine life. When I had walked past it was like seeing a hologram in a museum of some lost time. At that moment, we were in the same geographical place but really we were in two totally different worlds.

I wonder if those people will wake up coughing in two weeks. That sounds so dark and cynical and mean but I do wonder, and I hope that they will not and that they will prove all of us wrong and that letting the virus run its course was the right thing to do. I hope that because of their business, Newk's Eatery will stay open for years to come. I hope I'm just another sheep in the mindless herd that is letting this virus control my life and who I see and where I go. I hope that they're right and that it really isn't anything too bad. I hope that in a short time we'll all come to realize that this was all an over reaction, and I'll take my own friends to good old Newk's and we'll eat Sunday brunch without a care and my world and the bruncher's world will be the same again.